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PROGRAMME DEVELOPMENT IN THE EAST ASIA AND PACIFIC REGION

SUMMARY

The present document reports on and analyses major new trends and developments of UNICEF programme cooperation in the East Asia and Pacific region during 1993.

The UNICEF regional office has responsibilities for UNICEF cooperation in the following countries and territories: Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, China, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Lao People's Democractic Republic, Malaysia, Mongolia, Myanmar, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Republic of Korea, Singapore, Thailand, Viet Nam and the countries in the Pacific region (Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Niue, Palau, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu).

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I. REGIONAL OVERVIEW

1. Despite the favourable economic climate in most countries of the region, a large number of children of poor families are still living below the poverty line. However, in 1993, the economies of six countries in East Asia - China, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Republic of Korea, Singapore and Thailand - continued their spectacular growth, with rates between 7 and 13 per cent. Former socialist countries, Cambodia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Mongolia and Viet Nam, whose economies were in transition to market-oriented systems, recorded much lower economic growth rates.

2. In East Asia, increasing prosperity lifted many people out of absolute poverty. However, the number of households below the poverty line fell by only 1 per cent while the population grew by more than 2 per cent. Indicators of life expectancy, infant mortality and school enrolment improved in 1993 in almost all East Asian countries. To accelerate this trend, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), United Nations agencies and UNICEF collaborated in several inter-agency task forces to support strategies for social development in the region which focused on poverty reduction, popular participation and improved access to basic social services, including greater emphasis on preventive as opposed to curative measures for health, basic education, water supply and sanitation.

3. Governments in all countries of the region remained stable during the reporting period. Indonesia elected a new parliament and re-elected its President; Thailand's democratic coalition remains in power, although challenged by a very active opposition; the Philippines is moving rapidly towards concluding peace agreements with rebel groups; Malaysia saw a peaceful transition of leadership of its ruling party; a new democratic Government and first civilian chief executive were elected in the Republic of Korea; Cambodians, assisted by the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC), held elections, approved a new constitution, selected national leaders and saw the successful conclusion of UNTAC activities; and new Governments have been formed in the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Mongolia and Viet Nam, with a new, younger leadership.

II. CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD AND DECADE GOALS AND STRATEGIES

A. Convention on the Rights of the Child

4. Throughout the year UNICEF had dialogues with Governments and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) on the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which produced significant political and community support and encouraging developments regarding ratification. The Federated States of Fiji, the Marshall Islands, Micronesia, Papua New Guinea and Vanuatu became States Parties in 1993. Of the 29 countries in the region, Brunei Darussalam, Malaysia, Singapore and 12 Pacific island countries have yet to ratify the Convention. Viet Nam's first country monitoring report on the Convention was well received by the Committee on the Rights of the Child. Indonesia and the

Philippines also submitted national reports. In Bangkok, the Asia-Pacific Regional Preparatory Meeting on the World Conference on Human Rights unanimously adopted a resolution on child rights that was incorporated in the "Bangkok Human Rights Declaration". UNICEF assisted in discussions on the drafting of the Cambodian Constitution, resulting in an article obliging the Government to "protect the rights of the child as stipulated in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, in particular, the right to life, education, protection in the time of war and against economic or sexual exploitation". To institutionalize democracy in the war-shattered country following the conclusion of UNTAC activities, an Institute of Human Rights was established. In the Philippines, a Centre for Child Rights was established at the Philippines Human Rights Commission. The regional office facilitated the first mission to Asia of the Committee on the Rights of the Child. In Bangkok, the Committee had the opportunity to meet, among others, NGOs and the media. The Committee undertook field visits to the Philippines, northern Thailand and Viet Nam to witness, first hand, the situation of children in the region. Child Rights ASIANET, supported by the regional office, is a regional NGO formed to increase information exchange, advocacy and training. It held the first meeting of its Regional Advisory Council, comprising eminent persons from China, Indonesia and the Republic of Korea, in August. During the year, ASIANET conducted two training programmes on monitoring and reporting of compliance with the terms of the Convention on the Rights of the Child for government officials and NGOs responsible for child rights.

5. As a follow-up to the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) Summit Declaration in 1992, an ASEAN Plan of Action for Children was initiated and adopted by the ministers responsible for social welfare and development. Children's desk officers were designated in all member States, Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand to oversee the Plan's implementation.

B. Decade goals and strategies

6. The mid-decade goals received unprecedented support in the region from leaders of 17 Governments who met in Manila in September for a ministerial consultation. The "Manila Consensus" was adopted, which pledged support to work towards a "20/20" budget framework in support of social development, sustain universal child immunization (UCI), promote universal iodization of salt, make all hospitals including private facilities baby friendly, and pursue actively universal ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

7. Nine countries are expected to lead the region in achieving most of the mid-decade goals: China, Indonesia, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Malaysia, Mongolia, the Philippines, the Republic of Korea, Thailand and Viet Nam, which together represent over 90 per cent of the region's child population. The state of the mid-decade goals in the East Asia and Pacific region is as follows:

(a) Immunization. UCI was first achieved by Singapore in 1987, followed by China and the Republic of Korea in 1988, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and Mongolia in 1989 and Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand

and Viet Nam in 1990. All of those countries, except Mongolia, have been able to sustain UCI. Myanmar had a national coverage of 69 per cent, while Cambodia and the Lao People's Democratic Republic were still at 33 per cent national coverage. With the organization of national immunization days in the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar, the Philippines and Viet Nam, the number of unvaccinated children in the region will decrease dramatically in the near future;

(b) Neonatal tetanus. Three countries - the Republic of Korea, Mongolia and Papua New Guinea - reported no cases, while the disease is virtually disappearing in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Malaysia and Thailand. However, it is estimated that more than 100,000 cases of neonatal tetanus still occur in China every year;

(c) Measles. On the whole, morbidity and mortality from measles is on the decline in many countries of the region, and attempts have been made to include measles - along with poliomyelitis - as one of the antigens to be administered during national immunization days. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea and Malaysia reported no deaths from measles, while deaths from measles were still reported in China and the Philippines;

(d) Poliomyelitis. The eradication of poliomyelitis by the year 2000 appears to be an achievable goal in many countries of the region. No cases were reported in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Papua New Guinea and the Republic of Korea, whereas fewer than 10 cases were reported in Malaysia, Mongolia and the Philippines. Indonesia and Viet Nam still reported more than 100 cases and China more than 1,000 cases annually;

(e) Vitamin A deficiency. China, Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand are approaching the goal of eliminating vitamin A deficiency, while the remaining countries of the region can achieve this only with concerted effort. Vitamin A deficiency does not appear to be a serious health problem in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Mongolia, Papua New Guinea or the Republic of Korea;

(f) Iodization of salt. About 400 million persons in the region are at risk of developing iodine deficiency disorders. With the exception of Malaysia, all countries are producing their own salt for consumption. In countries other than the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, iodized salt is produced by a number of organizations, including government-owned and private enterprises, which complicates monitoring the iodization process. Efforts are being made to legalize salt iodization in many countries in the region;

(g) Use of oral rehydration therapy (ORT). ORT has been accepted as the most effective way of reducing deaths due to diarrhoeal diseases. However, in some countries, usage is still below 40 per cent. With the introduction of the new concept of ORT by the World Health Organization (WHO), the administration of any fluid plus continued feeding during diarrhoea, more energetic efforts will be needed so that the ORT use rate will reach 80 per cent or more in the countries of the region;

(h) Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative. With the acceleration of this programme in most countries of the region, the goals of the initiative can be achieved by 1995, with few exceptions. However, the complete cessation of free or low-cost supplies of infant formula to hospitals and maternity facilities remains a challenge;

(i) Malnutrition. On average, 26 per cent of children in the region are severely or moderately malnourished. Higher percentages prevail in some countries. Unlike UCI, the impact of reduced malnutrition may not be seen in the short term. Thailand managed virtually to eliminate third-degree malnutrition, largely due to a high rate of economic growth during the last three decades;

(j) Basic education. An average enrolment rate of 60 to 70 per cent was reported in the region. The completion rates of primary education were almost universal in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Malaysia, the Republic of Korea and Singapore. Other countries in the region continue to face drop-out and retention problems, resulting in too few children reaching grade five;

(k) Water supply and sanitation. In five countries - the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, the Philippines, the Republic of Korea, Singapore and Thailand - more than 80 per cent of the population have access to safe drinking water. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea, the Republic of Korea, Singapore and Thailand have achieved more than 90 per cent access to sanitary means of excreta disposal;

(l) Human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immune deficiency syndrome (HIV/AIDS). For the Asian region as a whole, WHO estimated that over 1 million persons have been infected with HIV, the majority in Thailand (450,000) and Myanmar (150,000). The prevailing risk behaviour that promotes the spread of HIV is present in virtually all countries of the region. All countries have included in their medium-term plans the prevention and control of HIV/AIDS. The main regional strategy is directed towards reducing risk behaviour through intensive information, education and communication and social mobilization efforts.

III. PROGRAMME PROGRESS AND TRENDS

A. Cooperation with regional institutions

8. Strategies for regional cooperation include regional networking, experience exchange and cooperation with regional institutions. These efforts have resulted in an increased policy emphasis among Governments and United Nations and donor agencies on the integration of children's issues into the broader framework of regional socio-economic development goals and strategies. Key activities include participation in inter-agency task forces, meetings of experts and country and agency consultations on poverty alleviation, social statistics and the development of indicators to monitor social change and women in development efforts. Cooperation with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization on Education for All, and with WHO on

Health for All, reinforced the UNICEF agenda for the mid-decade goals and the goals for children and development for the 1990s.

9. At regional and country levels, UNICEF and the United Nations Population Fund collaborated on the training and development of social indicators for Viet Nam, including joint missions to carry out an assessment and identify the measures needed to strengthen national capacity in monitoring social goals. Two seminars on primary health care (PHC) were organized in cooperation with the ASEAN Institute for Health Development and the Aga Khan Foundation. In Thailand, a research project on double fortification of salt with iodine and iron is in progress in cooperation with Bangkok's Siriraj Hospital.

10. Joint activities for information and experience exchange on street children were undertaken with CHILDHOPE, a regional NGO; on child labour, with Child Workers of Asia; on the use of sample surveys to generate information on children in especially difficult circumstances, with Social Weather Station; and on assistance to countries in the implementation and monitoring of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, with ASIANET.

B. Application of recent Executive Board policies

Use of global funds

11. Global funds were used by the regional and country offices primarily to accelerate programmes to achieve the mid-decade goals. UCI-related activities, including supplies for the expanded programme on immunization in some countries, still dominate the use of global funds, followed by other health and nutrition activities, education, water supply, sanitation and social mobilization. At the regional level, global funds were used to provide country offices with advisory services on basic education. Funds also were used for the preparation of guidelines on goal monitoring, training for social indicators and on two country case studies on national monitoring systems in Indonesia and Thailand. Regional funds were used for advocacy and mobilization with ASIANET, ASEAN and similar regional networks, including inter-agency forums on mid-decade goals and monitoring of social goals.

Multi-donor evaluation

12. All countries in the region considered the findings of the multi-donor evaluation, summarized in E/ICEF/1993/CRP.7, useful and timely. China, Mongolia and Thailand reviewed evaluation implications for new programme development. Cambodia, Myanmar and Viet Nam reviewed the evaluation findings in their mid-term country reviews. These will serve as inputs to strategy discussions for new country programme preparation. Indonesia (an Asian case study for the multi-donor evaluation) undertook major steps to sharpen its focus of current programmes towards capacity-building, community empowerment and service delivery strategies in areas of five provinces. This was carried out with other reassessments, including the gender dimension, programme cost-effectiveness and collaboration with NGOs. The Government of the Philippines evaluated the third country programme of cooperation just completed in the context of the multi-donor evaluation.

Country programme and project evaluation

13. A trend towards an increasing number of country-level programme evaluations has become evident, as shown in the table below:

Year	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	Total
Evaluations	37	39	38	44	65	76	299
Studies	3	4	14	76	104	93	294

14. There is a tendency towards impact analysis rather than service coverage or process assessment. Information exchange between countries in the region and between regions has been improved considerably due to the installation of CD-ROM facilities in the regional office.

15. The wide range of lessons learned from the evaluations include the impact of HIV/AIDS on shaping the new Thailand country programme; the effectiveness of female volunteer workers in raising PHC and maternal and child health, especially among Muslim communities in Thailand; the shifting of non-formal education from literacy and income generation to a purely literacy-focused intervention model in Indonesia; and the evaluation of breast-feeding in the Republic of Korea, which led to the use of hospitals as focal points for banning misleading advertisements on infant formula.

C. Regional office support to country programmes

16. In support of country-level planning and advocacy for the mid-decade goals, the regional office, together with the Manila country office and the Government of the Philippines, organized a ministerial consultation with the theme, "Achieving the mid-decade goals". Seventeen national delegations, headed by senior cabinet ministers, committed the region to the achievement of the mid-decade goals by 1995.

17. The regional office also provided a range of technical advisory and programme support and management services to country offices in the region, including country programme preparation support to countries submitting proposals to the 1994 Executive Board (Mongolia and Thailand). In Mongolia, UNICEF assisted in finalizing and publishing the Mongolian national programme of action, which was launched by the President of Mongolia in May 1993. The regional office organized study visits and training programmes for selected countries in the areas of health, nutrition, basic education, cost-analysis, health planning, information, social goals monitoring and the development of indicators and monitoring of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

18. The regional office provided a broad range of advisory and operational support services to country offices in the areas of personnel management, administrative and financial systems and procedures and support for supply operations and training for global procurement valued at over $7 million.

D. Trends and prospects

19. The regional office's framework for its priority agenda for children hinged on two vital global United Nations instruments: the Declaration and Plan of Action of the World Summit for Children and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The concrete implementation of the two initiatives in the region has proceeded at a fast pace since 1990. Viet Nam has offered to host the 1995 follow-up to the 1993 Manila Ministerial Consultation. In the meantime, various information, education and communication materials on the two initiatives have been published, together with the outcomes of a number of regional meetings and thematic studies to strengthen goal monitoring for the progress of children in the region.

20. The main challenges are: (a) the achievement of the mid-decade goals for the survival, protection and development of children in the 1990s, which directly support the country-level implementation and monitoring of national programmes of action already in progress; (b) increasing compliance and monitoring of the Convention on the Rights of the Child; and (c) substantive contribution to the international and regional dialogue leading to three vital conferences - the World Summit for Social Development (Copenhagen, 1995, with a regional preparatory meeting in Manila in October 1994), the International Conference on Population and Development (Cairo, September 1994) and the Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing, 1995, with a preparatory meeting in Jakarta in 1994).

21. The regional office will be working closely with country offices and cooperating with ESCAP and other regional United Nations agencies and institutions to support specific regional strategies in social development to promote human development and the "principle of a first call for children".